



# The Essence of Veda Chanting

Inaugural Address by Dr. Narendranath Reddy  
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**International Young Adults Veda Programme**  
**20 June 2020**

*Om Sahanavavatu  
Sahanau bhunaktu,  
Saha viryam karavavahai,  
Tejasvi navadhithamastu,  
Ma Vidvishavahai  
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi.*

May the Lord protect us, may He nourish us. May we acquire the capacity to study and understand the scriptures. May our study be brilliant and may we not cavil at each other. Om, Peace, peace, peace.

Sathya Sai Baba is the **Veda Maata** (Mother of Vedas), the **Veda Purusha** and **Vedamayaa** (which means He is the Veda Himself) and the **Veda Vedya** (He who can be realised and attained through Vedas).

Dr. Narendranath Reddy congratulated all the YAs for embarking on this journey to study the Vedas in depth and its teachings in accordance with Sathya Sai Baba's dictum of '**Start early, drive slowly, reach safely**'. These Vedas belong to Sanathana Dharma which dates back to 5,000 to 10,000 BC. Sanathana Dharma means eternal religion – there is no beginning. Likewise, Sathya Sai Baba's journal is called Sanathana Sarathi – He is the eternal charioteer who is taking us in the right direction. Vedas teach the eternal religion.

Dr. Reddy mentioned that the Vedas are infinite, but it can be summarised as **Brahma Satyam**

(God alone is true) **Jagat Mithya** (the world is illusionary), **Jivo Brahmaiva Naparah** (we the embodied beings, we are nothing but divine). The goal and purpose of human life is to realise and manifest our innate divinity, see the same divinity in the whole of the creation and also help others to realise the same truth. That is why it is beautifully said, the purpose is **Atmano Mokshartham Jagat Hitaya cha** (seeking one's own realisation and welfare of humanity). The ultimate goal is to realise the truth or Brahman. We are all born in accordance to Sanathana Dharma as **Shudra** as we are all born without the knowledge of the Atma. However, through the initiation of Gayatri Mantra, we become a **Dwij**a (which means twice born) where you begin to acquire the *Atmic* knowledge and are eligible to study the Vedas. That is the time sacred thread ceremony or **Upanayana** is conducted (**Upa** meaning close and **Nayana** meaning Eyes) which is coming closer to the vision of God when one is initiated to chant Gayatri Mantra. Dr. Reddy appreciated the overwhelming participation in the Akhanda Gayatri Chanting the past weekend. The four main Vedas are Rig-Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. Once you have studied the Vedas in depth, you become a **Vipra**. The last stage is you become a **Brahmana** (Brahmin). You become a **Brahmana** not just by reading Vedas but only by practising the teachings and attaining the knowledge of Brahman. In Rig Veda, it is said **Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti** which

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means that there is only one truth, the wise people perceive and call it by different names.

The etymological meaning of the word Veda comes from the word **Vid** which means *knowing*. We all are in the eternal quest for knowledge, **Sat Chit Ananda** (knowledge, existence and bliss) which is our very own nature. So, Vedas are repository of knowledge. Vedas have no beginning (**Anadi**), they are infinite (**Ananto Vai Vedaha**), they are revelations from the divine (**Apaurusheya**) and are called breath of the Lord.

Vedas are also called as **Sruti** which means to 'hear' as it was revealed to the Sages through hearing the voice of the Lord in deep meditation and it was verbally transmitted to disciples thereafter. **Sruti** is also classified as **Trayee** (Three vedas – Rig, Yajur and Sama veda which were recognised at the beginning). These Vedas are also called **Nigama** and **Chandhas**. Therefore, Mother Gayatri is called **Chandhasam Maata** – Mother of the Vedas. The Vedas are revelations of truth by the sages or seers.

The four types of Vedas were compiled (**Samhita**) and codified by the great sage Veda Vyasa who is considered the embodiment of the Lord himself.

- **Rig Veda** – hymns of the Lord
- **Yajur Veda** – worship of the Yagnas
- **Sama Veda** – songs and music
- **Atharva Veda** – knowledge storehouse of **Atharvanas**

The four Vedas have four parts as following:

- **Samhitas** – about hymns
- **Brahmanas** – about rituals and yagnas
- **Aaranyakas** – contemplation and dialogue of highest truth
- **Upanishads** – the repository of the highest knowledge (**Jnana**).

Sathya Sai Baba in the Upanishad Vahini recorded that originally 1,180 Upanishads existed. Over time, many were lost, and 108 Upanishads were left. Of them, Adi Shankara wrote commentaries on ten Upanishads. These ten Upani-

shads are also mentioned in Upanishad Vahini and can be accessed in the link here:

<http://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/upanishad-vahini>

They are then again further classified as the following:

- **Karma Kanda** (performing rituals)
- **Upasana Kanda** (worship the Lord)
- **Jnana Kanda** (which is Upanishads)

In Bhagavad Gita, out of the 18 chapters, the first six emphasises on **Karma**, the next six emphasises on **Bhakthi** and the last six emphasises on **Jnana**. The same demarcations are seen in the Sathya Sai Centres and its different wings.

Sathya Sai Baba gave a lot of importance to Vedas because His mission is four fold:

- **Veda Poshana** – He is there to support and nurture the Vedas
- **Vidhwat Poshana** – to nurture the scholars who are interested in learning the Vedas
- **Dharma Sthapana** – the Lord supports the act of Dharma when there is a decline
- **Bhakta Samrakshana** – protect the devotee

To fulfil the above, Veda Purusha Saptaha Yagna was initiated by Sathya Sai Baba during Dussera in October 1961 wherein many scholars were blessed by Him. Following that in 1962, He started **Veda Pathashala** to teach Vedas and later on, Veda learning was introduced in schools and colleges. In September 2003, Veda chanting was introduced during Darshan. In 2006, **Ati Rudra Maha Yagna** was initiated by Sathya Sai Baba with chanting of **Sri Rudram** 1331 times. Sathya Sai Baba's house name in Kodaikanal is '**Sai Sruthi**', in Brindavan - '**Trayee Brindavan**' and in Prasanthi Nilayam - '**Yajur Mandir**' thereby giving importance to Vedas. '**Satyam Jnanam Anantham Brahma**' is a **bhajan** which has its roots in **Taittiriya Upanishad**, part of the **Krishna Yajur Veda**. Everything is embedded with Vedic chants. Dr. Reddy highlighted that many Avatars incarnated for reviving the Vedas and mentioned some of them. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says **vedanam sama-vedo 'smi** which means of all

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the Vedas, I am the Sama-veda. He gave importance to Aum and Gayatri.

Additionally, when chanting the Vedas, we should know the meaning of the Vedas. The most important one is the **Aumkaar (Pranava Upasana)** emphasised in **Taittiriya Upanishad** and is the central theme of the **Mandukya Upanishad**. AUM represents four stages: Waking Stage (**Jagrath**), Dream Stage (**Swapna**), Deep Sleep Stage (**Shushupti**) and Ultimate Stage (**Turiya**). Aumkaar represents the sound symbol of the formless God. It is universal mantra. In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says anyone leaving their last breath with the word Aum on the lips will be liberated. Hence, Sathya Sai Baba advises the chanting of Aumkaar 21 times in the early morning to clean up five **karmendriyas** (organs of action), five **jnanendriyas** (organs of perception), five **pranaas** (vital airs), five **koshas** (sheaths) and finally to attain the Atma.

More details can be found in:  
<https://sathyasai.org/devotion/omkar.html>

The second one is **Gayatri mantra** as this is the most powerful mantra. This is the mother of Vedas and we should know the meaning of the five parts or faces of the mantra emphasising adoration, meditation and prayer. Sathya Sai Baba said referring to the power of Gayatri, **Gāyan-tam trāyate iti Gayatri** means chanting it protects one from everything.

More details can be found in  
<https://sathyasai.org/gayatri>

Third is the **Sri Rudram or Rudraprashna or Rudropanishad** which is a very important part of the **Krishna Yajur Veda**. The heart of the Vedas is the Yajur Veda and heart of the Yajur Veda is Krishna Yajur Veda, the heart of which is Sri Rudram, the heart of which is the 8<sup>th</sup> Anuvaka and the heart of the 8<sup>th</sup> Anuvaka is the **Panchakshari Mantra** (Five syllables) “Om Namah Shivaya”, which is equivalent to chanting the Sri Rudram as emphasised by Sathya Sai Baba. Sri Rudram has 11 Anuvakas in Namakam and 11 Anuvakas in Chamakam.

More details can be found in  
<https://sathyasai.org/festival/mahasivarathri>  
(Message of Sri Rudram)

Dr. Reddy also delved into the meaning of the **Purusha Suktam** and the three Kandas mentioned within it. It is important to understand the inner significance.

To chant the Vedas, intonation, rhythm and accuracy is very important. Second part of chanting is, it should be done with sincerity and devotion. Third is, to know the meaning of the Vedas. Chanting can be done at any time as God is beyond time. However, if one wants to choose a particular time, Sathya Sai Baba has given importance to the timing from 4 am to 8 am and 4 pm to 8 pm.

Knowledge of the Brahman is in the Upanishads. Main part of the Vedas mention about Dharma, Artha and Kama (three Purusharthas). Upanishads mention about the fourth Purushartha – Moksha. Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Shlokas 45-46, **traigunya-vishaya vedānistraigunyo bhavārjuna** – Vedas are in the realm of the three gunas but one should go beyond the gunas. Vedas are helpful as guideposts. Sathya Sai Baba referred to Vedas as **Apara Vidya** in His discourse in 1987, which is aimed at **Chittashuddi** (purification of the mind) and one pointedness. We should endeavour to go towards **Para Vidya** which refers to sadhana and intense practice, which will lead one to self-realisation as mentioned in the Upanishads.

In summary, Sathya Sai Baba has summarised the Veda in one sentence – *Realise the same Atma who is residing in you is same in all beings, everywhere same Atma pervades.*

In conclusion, it is essential to practise the essence of the Vedas in our daily lives as advised by Sathya Sai Baba. He often used to quote from **Kaivalya Upanishad: ‘Na karmana na prajaya dhanena, tyagenaike amritatvamanasuh’** which means “neither by actions, nor by progeny or wealth, but by renunciation alone is immortality attained”. It is attained only by sacrifice. Sathya Sai Baba has emphasised that ego should be sacrificed for realising Atmic immor-



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tality. Removal of immorality is the way to immortality. Sathya Sai Baba mentions the purpose of spiritual life is to get rid of grief and attain unending bliss which is what He refers to when He sings, "Love is my form; Bliss is my Food".

Dr. Reddy ends the address with chanting of *'Asato Ma Sadgamaya, Tamasoma Jyothir Ga-*

*maya, Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya'* – Lord lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light and death to immortality.

The International YA Veda team thanked Dr. Reddy for the inspiring address reflecting the purpose, goal and deeper meaning of Vedas. The following questions contributed by YAs were answered by Dr. Reddy on the topic.

### Q&A Session

**There is a common belief that the Vedas belong to Hinduism, how can we break this belief and make people aware of the oneness explained in the Vedas?**

Sanathana Dharma is an eternal religion with no beginning, and no end. The Vedas are known as Anadi because they are revelations from the Lord Himself-*Apaurusheya*. They are the breath of God. They are associated with Hinduism because the people who were living in the area were chanting the Vedas and they were called Hindus around 500 BC in the Indus Valley. Vedic culture existed much before that. It is applicable to everyone; it is a way of life and transcends all barriers. It has been adopted by foreign philosophers as well.

**Has Sathya Sai Baba emphasised on any other Vedas apart from Rudram and Gayathri chanting?**

Other than Sri Rudram, Gayatri Chanting, Omkar, He used to often mention in His discourses excerpts from Upanishads (Kaivalya Upanishad) and Taittiriya Upanishad. It is important to know the basic knowledge of Sanskrit to learn the Vedas. He was very fond of Sri Suktam as was evident in the video of the divine discourse played at the start of the session. Sathya Sai Baba has emphasised Bhagavad Gita as it is the essence of all the Upanishads. His teachings are the Vedas.

**How can we ensure that Veda chanting benefits us the most?**

Firstly, one must have conviction. If you chant it with devotion, correct intonation and sincerity it will benefit you. Vedas are time tested and proven as people have chanted these sacred mantras for thousands of years. By contemplating, we will get results. Secondly, one must know the meaning of the mantras in order for it to sink into one's heart for added benefit. Finally, one must endeavour to practise it in daily life for optimum benefit and eventually it will become a part of you.

